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Agency Is Reported to Have Known for Almost a Year Rebels Were Using It

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 23 — Evidence disclosed in the last few days indicates that Central Intelligence Agency officials knew for almost a year that Nicaraguan rebels were using an agency manual advising them to assassinate Government officials, intelligence officials said today.

But the officials and rebel officers said the C.I.A. made no effort to withdraw the booklet or advise the rebels not to use it.

Today, the C.I.A. "ordered any of the manuals extant to be recalled and has sent word that it is now inoperative," according to Senator Patrick J. Leahy, Democrat of Vermont, who is a member of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

Mr. Leahy also said C.I.A. officials had told him that "there is now a complete prohibition of any involvement in any way, shape or manner with the rebels."

'Offensive Material' Remained

A senior Nicaraguan rebel leader said in an interview today that "I don't remember anyone coming to get the manual" or "advising us not to use it."

At a meeting with two members of the Senate intelligence committee on Monday, C.I.A. officials said copies of the manual were sent to Washington soon after it was written late last year. Agency officers reviewed and edited the booklet before it was returned to the rebels in Honduras, they said.

But "some of the offensive material remained intact," including the advice on "neutralizing" government officials, according to Senator Sam Nunn, Democrat of Georgia. He attended the C.I.A. briefing along with Senator Malcolm Wallop, Republican of Wyoming.

In fact, rebel leaders said, the manual that their officers used for training for more than six months included nearly all the "offensive material."

Mr. Nunn said, "We did not get testimony on how high up in the agency it went."

"There was no indication that it went to high levels in the agency," he said. "But there was no indication that it did not, either. Those are questions that remain and have to be asked."

Panel Plans Full Meeting

The intelligence committee announced today that it would hold a full committee hearing on the manual early next week.

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Democrat of New York, who is deputy chairman of the intelligence committee, said the C.I.A. officials "just won't say if they have found this guy," the employee who is believed to have written the manual.

The senior rebel leader, Alfonso Callejas Deshon, said today that he remembered some discussions about the manual among rebel leaders and "the Americans who normally meet with us" in Honduras.

The Americans were "U.S. Government people," he said, "who came to see how we made use of the funds the U.S. provided." He said he assumed the Americans worked for the C.I.A.

Rebels Report Editing Book

Some of the discussions included "objections we had to things in the manual," such as "the parts about blackmailing people."

But the Americans "never tried to collect the books, as far as I know," Mr. Callejas said.

Rebel leaders said they edited some copies of the primer themselves by ripping out two pages and were not aware of any other editing. The C.I.A. officials

told Congress that they edited the book, in Honduras and in Washington. Intelligence officials say they cannot explain the conflict. It may be that it was edited twice, they said.

In any case, 2,000 copies of the manual were published. Whatever editing the manual received, rebel leaders and intelligence officials said this was among the advice included in the final version:

¶Blackmail citizens so they can be coerced to work for the guerrillas. If they do not cooperate, tell Sandinista officials that the citizens are working for the rebels.

¶Seize a small city that is "relatively neutral or passive in the conflict." If "it becomes necessary" to shoot a citizen leaving the city, explain that he was an "enemy of the people" who would have alerted the Sandinistas so they could "carry out acts of reprisals, such as rapes, pillage, destruction, captures, etc."

¶"Neutralize" selected public officials, "such as court judges, police and state security officials. Gather together the population affected so they will be present and take part in the act" and then choose someone to replace the "target."

Senators Nunn and Wallop pointed out that the word "neutralize" does not necessarily mean kill, and the word "assassinate" never does appear in the manual. But Senator Nunn said, "Reasonable people could conclude that improper purposes were implied" that "would contravene the President's directive" prohibiting Government officials from participating in assassinations.

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